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ABSTRACT

The General Electric (GE) Early Years Initiative, a grant-funded GE Fund, GE's corporate Foundation and GE Elfun, GE's international program created by volunteer organization, has helped elementary school students improve their reading skills through the use of volunteers since 1994. This publication describes Early Years projects, provides program information, and lists participating locations and program contacts. The bulk of the book is comprised of program descriptions and program information. Program information delineates grades served, how the program works, reasons for success, teacher training requirements, GE volunteers, grant uses, sites, and contacts. The following programs are described: (1) Accelerated Reader and Reading Renaissance Programs, computerized reading management program; (2) Book in a Bag, a check-out program; (3) Economics Game; (4) Fort Edward Free Library, a library-school partnership; (5) GET Smart, volunteer tutoring; (6) The Green Thumb Club, raising and selling plants; (7) Literature Celebration Day; (8) Mentoring; (9) Modem Mates, computer connections to enhance student teamwork; (10) Mother Goose Asks "Why?", science and math activities with correlated reading materials; (11) Power Lunch, volunteers reading to students at lunch; (12) Science and Reading to Go!, inquiry-based science kits with correlated reading materials; (13) Smyrna-Moore Mentoring and Tutoring Program; (14) STAR--Science Technology and Reading, science lab kits of experiments and related books; (15) Super Lit Quiz Bowl; (16) Tae Kwon Do, marital arts to learn self-awareness and self-discipline; and (17) Troll Multicultural Program, a summer literature program. The book describes the application process and outlines time requirements for various types of volunteer opportunities. (KB)

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READ TODAY, LEAD TOMORROW

How Corporate Grants, Volunteers, and Community Leadership Can Bring About Student Success

The Story of the GE Early Years Initiative

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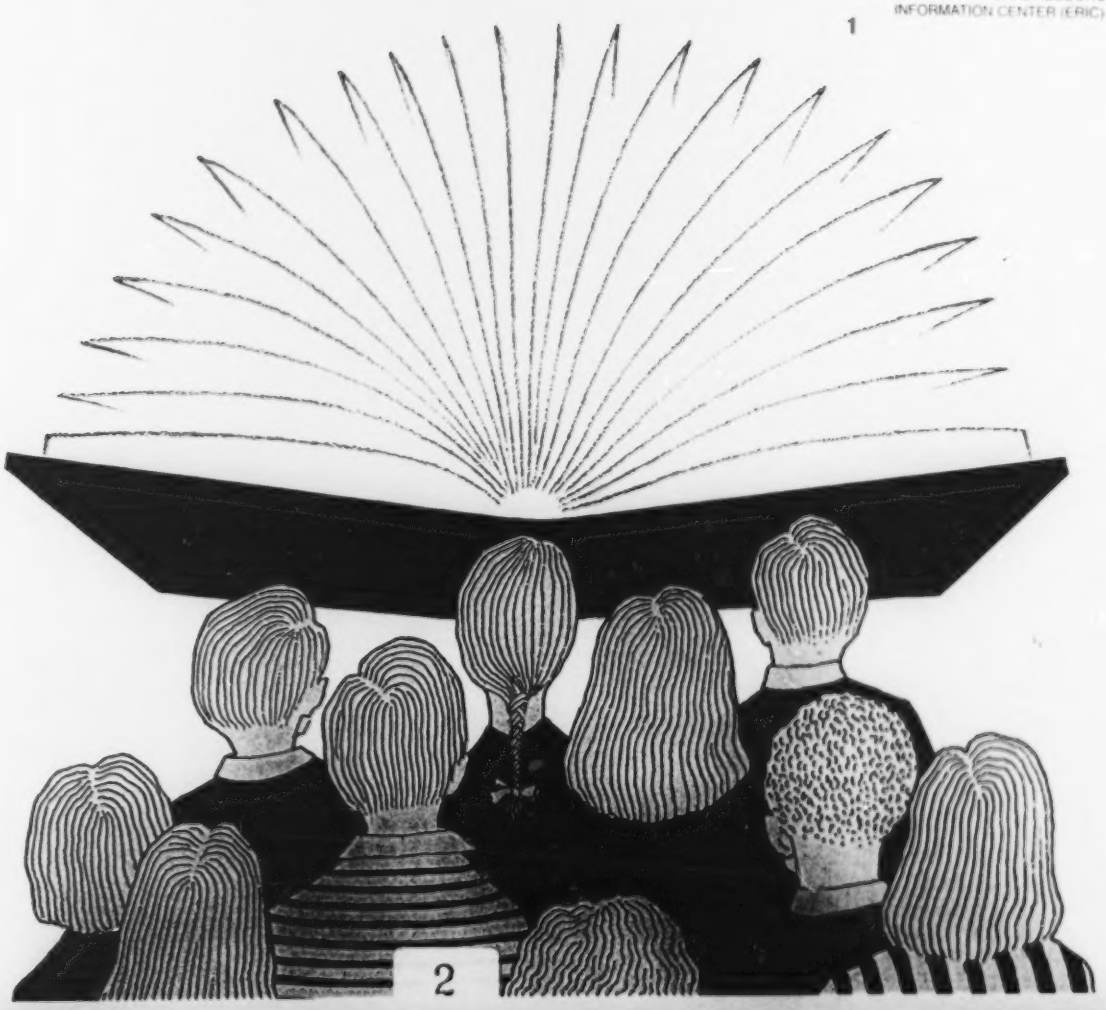

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You Can Be a Volunteer

OPPORTUNITIES IN BOTH ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS

VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES	TIME REQUIREMENTS
Reading to young children	Once a month to three times a week
Reading aloud to a class	Once a week
Tutoring	At least once a week
Participating in a lunch bunch	Meet with elementary school students in the lunchroom at least once a week
Mentoring	Weekly, monthly, or as scheduled; a few hours for training
Teaching classes	Once or twice a year up to once a week
Helping with homework	Once a week
Demonstrating science experiments	Once a week to once a month
E mail mentoring	Initial meeting, then regular contact with students in schools with e-mail set-up
Editing student writing in the classroom	Once a week
Attending cultural activities with students	A few times a year
Helping to set up computers and keep them running	Intensive for a few days or on call frequently
Training students/teachers in how to use computers	For teachers, a few hours informally once or twice at start up; for students, could be much more
Establishing and sponsoring educational club	Once or twice a week
Teaching a skill	Once or twice a year to weekly
Coaching students for tests	Could be intensive for short time or once a week for a few months
Taking students to work site	One to ten times a year
Part time coaching for sports	At least twice a week during sports season
Taking part in Outward Bound type of activities	Once or twice a year
Serving on an advisory board	Monthly ten to twelve times a year
Visiting colleges with students	Once or twice a year
Assisting with financial aid packages	Annual training; one or two nights of intensive assistance for parents and students or possibly once a week in the classroom during financial aid application period
Establishing or running a job bank for students	Could require considerable time to keep it active
Training students in interviewing techniques	Two to eight times a year

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READ TODAY, LEAD TOMORROW

How Corporate Grants, Volunteers, and Community Leadership Can Bring About Student Success

The Story of the GE Early Years Initiative

GE Fund

Elfun

A Volunteer
of GE Leader

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This book was underwritten by a grant from the GE Fund to the National Center for Education in Maternal and Child Health. The GE Fund is the General Electric corporate foundation. Its primary focus is on education. It has its own president, board, and fund managers who oversee the grant programs it supports.

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GE Elfun, which is the source of most of the volunteers for the programs described in this booklet, is GE's international volunteer organization dedicated to community service.

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The mission of the National Center for Education in Maternal and Child Health is to promote and improve the health, education, and well-being of children and families. Established in 1982 at Georgetown University, NCEMCH is part of the university's Graduate Public Policy Program.

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Preface

Something wonderful is happening. At more than 30 locations around the country, GE employees and retirees are helping elementary students improve their reading. They are participating in the GE Early Years Initiative that provides schools with grants from the GE Fund, the company's philanthropic arm, and volunteer mentors and tutors from Elfun, GE's volunteer service organization.

"The dream," said Phyllis McGrath, former GE Fund program manager, "is to develop a love of reading in each of these young people." To that end, the Early Years Initiative was launched in 1994.

A closer look at this pioneering program appears on the following pages, as well as program descriptions, program information, lists of participating locations, and program contacts.

The GE Fund, GE Elfun, and the writers gratefully acknowledge the contributions of the following schools, organizations, and individuals:

Anderson Oconee Pickens HUB—Thomas T. Peters and Elizabeth Edmondson; *Boston Partners in Education*—Olivia Mathews; *Carver Elementary School*—Sandra McLendon; *Charlton Heights Elementary School*—Daniel Riggins, JoAnn DeChants, and Carol Douglas; *Chase Elementary School; Christ the King School*—Jeff Johnson and Sue West; *College Gardens Elementary School*—Marge Winick; *Drewicz Elementary School; Everybody Wins Foundation, Inc.*—Arthur Tannenbaum and Kim Suttell; *Fort Edward Elementary School*—Joe Murphy and Nancy Williams; *Hendersonville Boys and Girls Club*—Caron Mckay; *IXL Elementary School; K.R. Smith Elementary School; Lowell Elementary School; Lubeck Elementary School*—Jennifer Hale, Jerri Rexroad, and Karen Sexauer; *Madison Elementary School; Moore High School; Public School 111*—Robert Kinzelberg, Madeleine Boyer, Wendy Lashin, Jane Rosenblum, and Carmen Vega; *Reading Is Fundamental, Inc.*—James Wendorf and Mary Haggerty; *Rosendale Elementary School*—Edwina Meyer; *Smyrna Elementary School; Tamassee Elementary School*—Malissa Brown; *Timrod Elementary School*—Linda Huggins; *Vermont Center for the Book*—Sally Anderson; *The Volunteer Talent Center, Jefferson County Public Schools*—Roy Birmingham; *Waterford-Halfmoon Elementary School*—Ward Patton, Doris Dunkleberger, and Walt Sawyer; *Wrightsboro Elementary School*—Michael Zentmeyer.

The following GE plants and components provide the volunteers and managers of the Early Years Initiative programs that appear in this book:

Aircraft Engines, Corporate Headquarters, Corporate Research and Development, Electrical Distribution and Control, Engine Services, Information Services, Lighting Systems, Medical Systems, NBC, Nuclear Power, Plastics, Power Delivery, Power Systems, Silicones.

Special thanks to the following GE employees and retirees interviewed for this report: .

Doug Alkema, Shaun Branon, Bob Brown, Jo Ellen Butcher, Dorothy Buzz, Jim Cahill, Tom Campbell, Joe Carratelli, Ron Cotton, Patricia Crans, Joseph Fischetti, Warren Halper, John Helbing, Linda Heuring, Tim Kelleher, John Kilgour, Chris King, Jacquie Kovach, Bud Linder, Tom McCarthy, Frank Meredith, Jim Morehead, Wayne Musick, Earl Nichols, Ken Nichols, Jay O'Brien, Jim Perkins, Mark Reeder, Nina Robinson, Nancy Ropelewski, Jennifer Russell, John Saladino, John Scaturro, Bill Squires, Frank Traver, Kathy VanderLaan, Jack Veno, Debbie Wexler, Marek Winiarz, and John Zablocki.

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What is the GE Early Years Initiative?

In response to the recent announcement of a federal government program to use volunteers to assure that all elementary school children are reading up to their grade level, the executive director of the International Reading Association commented: "If volunteers would help students to practice reading for a half an hour a week, it would make a big difference for most kids."

GE staff members have been volunteering to help children read for a long time. Starting in 1994, three years before the government announcement about volunteers, the GE Fund, General Electric Company's corporate foundation, and GE Elfun, GE's international volunteer organization dedicated to community service, created the GE Early Years Initiative. It is a grants program in which GE employees and retirees help elementary school students improve their reading. So far, more than 30 GE facilities have teamed up with local schools to receive these grants, and the numbers increase each semester.

To become part of the Early Years Initiative, a chapter of GE Elfun and a school apply together for a small grant to help improve reading using volunteers to assist. The schools generally have relatively large numbers of low-income students and are near GE facilities.

The GE Fund has committed $250,000 a year for these grants. The Fund's primary focus is on education. It has its own president, board, and fund managers who oversee the grant programs it supports.

This is not the first time the GE Fund and GE Elfun have teamed up to develop an education program utilizing volunteers and grants. In 1989, the GE Fund committed $20 million over 10 years to support the GE College Bound Program. Its goal is to double or significantly increase the rate at which all or a selected group of high school students attend college. The College Bound Program also depends heavily on volunteer effort. It is very successful and was one of only two corporate programs to be honored by President Clinton with a 1994 President's Volunteer Action Award.

How Does the Early Years Initiative Work?

Reading is the cornerstone of education. The programs created as a result of the Early Years Initiative grants are based on the knowledge that "learning to read" in the primary grades is critical to a student's success in "reading to learn" in the higher grades. Through the second grade, children are generally still learning how to read. In third and fourth grades, students begin the transition to reading for knowledge and for pleasure. Most children get to the reading-for-knowledge stage eventually, although they may not be comfortable readers. Reading for pleasure brings about the comfort. But it takes something special to get children to read for pleasure—something that captures their interest, their imagination, their hopes for the future. And it doesn't hurt if that something includes a bit of competition to encourage peer pressure to read.

The Early Years programs for younger children emphasize the importance of reading skills and reinforce learning with the adult serving as the reader and mentor. In these programs, GE volunteers read to and with the children, help them with their reading and writing, discuss literature, point out special authors and illustrators and describe how they work, and mentor young children through this important developmental stage. The volunteers also serve as strong role models for the children on the importance of reading.

Early Years programs for intermediate grades are aimed at students who are going from the "learning to read" to the "liking to read" stage. These programs capture the students' imagina-

tion and interest through science and technology, community exploration, and reading beyond their assignments. The programs encourage kids to read about the arts, visit museums, learn new skills, or use their inventiveness to solve problems. In some cases, the programs appear to have little to do with reading, but, in fact, the students are reading and writing every day. The GE volunteers, many of whom are scientists and engineers, bring their knowledge to the classrooms by doing experiments with students, reading with them and discussing their newfound knowledge, encouraging them as they read to learn, and mentoring with enthusiasm.

Some of the early GE Fund grants were used to create programs that would encourage reading and use volunteers. These programs have subsequently spread to other schools within the Early Years Initiative, and beyond. Some of the programs have remained local, although they may have potential for use by other schools once certain local aspects are adjusted. Some programs have been developed by school staff or nonprofit groups. Others are commercial programs that have been adopted by schools because they have proven effective and tie in nicely with volunteer efforts. Program choices are generally made by staff at the school in cooperation with the GE volunteers. In all cases, the program must encourage reading, even if the subject matter for the program falls in the area of math, science, social studies, or some other topic. Writing, too, is encouraged.

Volunteers in the programs may work directly with the children one on one as tutors, mentors, partners, co-readers, friends. They may also teach a small group or a whole class. In some cases, the volunteers teach the teachers or parents. Their activities may require volunteering time each week, once a month, for a short period that includes a few intensive days, or for a few days spread over the course of a whole school year.

Project managers are principals, teachers, librarians, subject-matter experts, or volunteer coordinators. They may simply serve as the grant financial officer, but most are actively involved in the program alongside the volunteers and, indeed, may actually have created the particular program. The corporate volunteer coordinator for the local Early Years Initiative project is usually one of the current or past officers of the local GE Elfun chapter. Some of the successful ideas developed under Early Years Initiative grants are described in this booklet. The descriptions can serve as models or springboards for companies of all sizes that want to initiate or expand school-business partnerships for the future well-being of the entire community. Made up of company volunteers, along with representatives from the local population, parents, and staff, each partnership can reflect and meet local needs for a well-educated workforce.

Applications for Grants

Schools that have been partnering with nearby GE volunteers for a long time are obvious candidates for a GE Early Years Initiatives grant. In other cases, the local GE facility works with the local school district to select the appropriate school. In most cases, the school and the local Elfun chapter submit the application.

Applications are simple to prepare. They must include a brief description of the project submitted by the school or school district; an explanation of the relationship between the Elfun chapter and the school and what Elfun's involvement will be in the project; a statement of the number of volunteers recruited or anticipated; and a plan for evaluating the project. Preference is given to projects that address poor and disadvantaged populations, but others may be considered if an Elfun chapter is not located near an urban or poor school district.

Each grant application is reviewed by the GE Fund Manager and the GE Fund Pre-College Advisory Committee. After receiving feedback from the review, the school may have to refine the grant application to assure that it meets the limited, but flexible requirements. All grants must be approved by the Fund's board. (See inside back cover for the recommended contents for a GE Early Years Initiative application.)

Money

The GE Fund has allocated $250,000 a year to support the GE Early Years Initiative. Awards of $15,000 or more are available, with the amount dependent upon the nature of the project, its potential impact upon the school, the school's ability to sustain the project after the completion of the grant, and the resources of the GE Fund. The grants are nonrenewable, although in some cases they may be spread over two or more years.

Project directors and volunteers have great latitude in the use of the funds. Funds, for example, may be used to purchase children's literature, buy school reading programs, provide teacher and volunteer training, improve computer facilities for reading-related activities, create new reading programs that use both the classroom teacher and volunteers, or to develop a mix of various activities that will improve children's performance and their attitudes about reading.

Funds may not be used for normal operating expenses of a school, salaries, computers, or hardware, nor can they be used for a capital campaign or for renovation work.

If there is any question about how the money may be used, the GE Fund Manager is available for advice.

Grants are usually payable to a school district or government agency. If they are paid to any other organization, it must have IRS-certified nonprofit status.

Projects are not required to spend all of the grant funds within a given year. Some schools have carefully managed and shepherded their money so that they are able to extend the project well beyond the actual grant period.

Results

Since many of the programs have only been in place for a short time, it is still too early to have definitive results, but all of the schools are enthusiastic. They report that reading has increased, the library is busier than ever, attitudes about books and learning have improved, and attendance is up—particularly on days when volunteers are in the classroom. For volunteer programs tied to a specific test, scores are higher than in previous years.

The teachers are very specific about their appreciation for the volunteers. Said one, "The students, as well as their teacher, eagerly look forward to our volunteer's weekly visits. He made a real effort to get to know the students and was able to offer help at their level. The students were comfortable asking for help and appreciated his caring manner. We published more than 100 books because of his wonderful classroom assistance."

And the volunteer's reaction? "I can't believe they let me off work to have so much fun."

Volunteers in the Classroom

In many schools, the GE volunteers spend their time in the classroom, doing what the teacher asks them to do. This can mean reading to an individual student or a small group, helping half the class with math, editing the writing of a whole class, or even teaching a specific lesson.

For instance, a volunteer from GE in Rockville, Maryland, has worked with the same second-grade teacher for two years. In the first year, he helped with science. Just before the birth of his first child at the end of the year, the children wrote him advice on how to take care of a baby. After all, many of them had little brothers and sisters.

The next year, he met with the second graders every week to edit their writing. This included helping them decide on their topics, checking their spelling, making sure that sentences were complete, and listening to them read what they had written. Over the course of the year, the students wrote five or six "books," most

We watch the birds on the bird feeder.

Editor's Note

The editors of this new book wish to thank Mr. O'Brien for his eagerly anticipated weekly visits to their classroom. For the past year he has helped them publish a total of about 100 books. They in turn became his editor and helped him prepare this book for publication. All of us join in thanking him for his enthusiasm, encouragement and friendship this school year. We think Emily has one terrific dad!!

June 1997

Anthony
Gull P.
Carolyn Olivia Y.
Amy
Lydia
Elysha
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Nicky
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Brandon Luke Roshan
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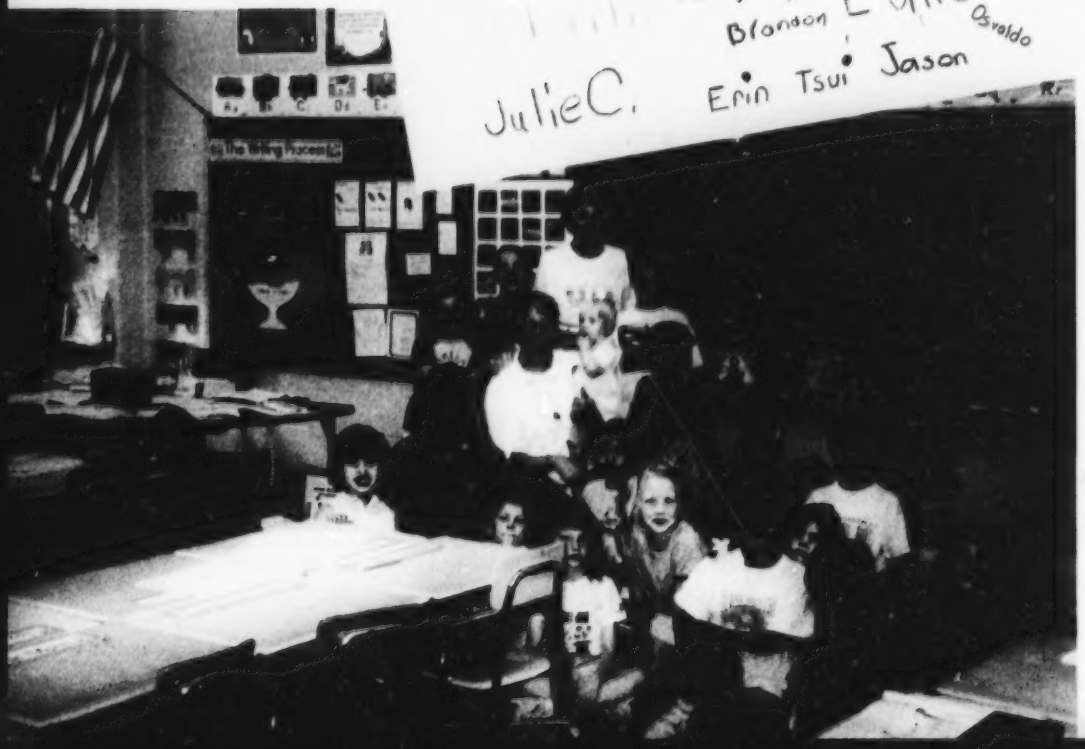


consisting of a sentence or two on each page along with an appropriate illustration. They then typeset them on the computer and published them.

At the end of the school year, the teacher said, "Our volunteer has read books that all of you have written, but we have never read any of his writing. I think it's time for him to write a book for us! How about telling us what it is like to be a new dad?" So he did.

He wrote a sentence on each page, drew pictures with crayons to go with the sentence, and read his "book" to the class. He deliberately put in some mistakes for the students to correct, which they were eager to point out. When he went to make corrections, they secretly entered his story into their computer, published a hard cover edition, and presented it to him at the end of the year.

Some GE volunteers in Cincinnati have taken on the library. They got lots of new books for the kids to read and made sure that the books were available for the children to take home. (Until then, the books had been looked on as references only.) If a book is not returned, they use the grant for a replacement. After all, the book is being read and loved, and that is the whole point.

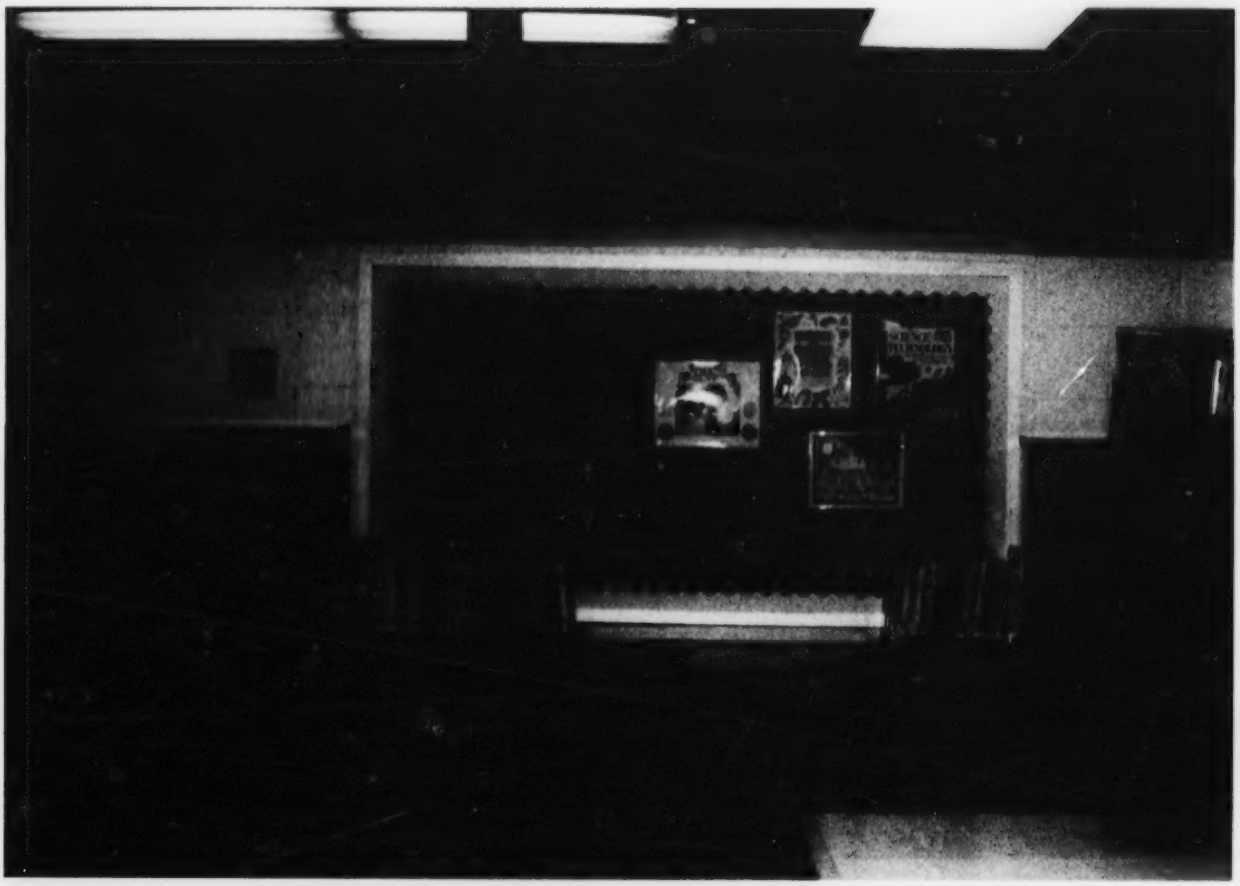
In Parkersburg, West Virginia, a GE volunteer reads to fourth graders every week. She chooses books about animals because the classroom has its own menagerie. Recently, while finishing a book with the children, the volunteer noticed a hamster in a mesh ball rolling its way to the front of the class. So did the students. Finally, the teacher saw the hamster and picked it up. She told it, "Normally, the kids would be interested in you. But now they want to hear the end of their story."

A volunteer in Florence, South Carolina, was reading with a third grader. The boy told the volunteer about his favorite part of the story, and then read that section. The volunteer asked the boy if he knew where the public library was so he could get some other books by the same author. After he heard the description of the library, the boy said his mother worked near there. Volunteer: "So are you going to get your mother to take you to the library this summer?" Boy: "I'm going to get her to take me this afternoon."

Stories from the volunteers of what is meaningful to them also reflect what is meaningful to the students. When one group of kindergartners heard that a scientist was going to come to read to them in class, one of them exclaimed, "I've always wanted to meet a scientist!" And at the end of the year, these same students wrote letters in their own invented spelling that said, "The ge siyitst r col" (the GE scientists are cool) and "The G.E. pepols boks r grat" (the GE people's books are great).

Teachers, too, are enthusiastic. They say, "Thank you!!" and "For my children, the volunteers are the highlight of the week. If the volunteer can't come for some reason, even the prospect of recess can't make up for it."

The biggest results have been the smiling faces of the children when the volunteer greets them. In one class in Winfield, Kansas, where the GE volunteer comes every Tuesday, the calendar has been changed to Monday, Dougday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday. What more could a volunteer ask?



The library is a place for books and encouragement.

Program Descriptions

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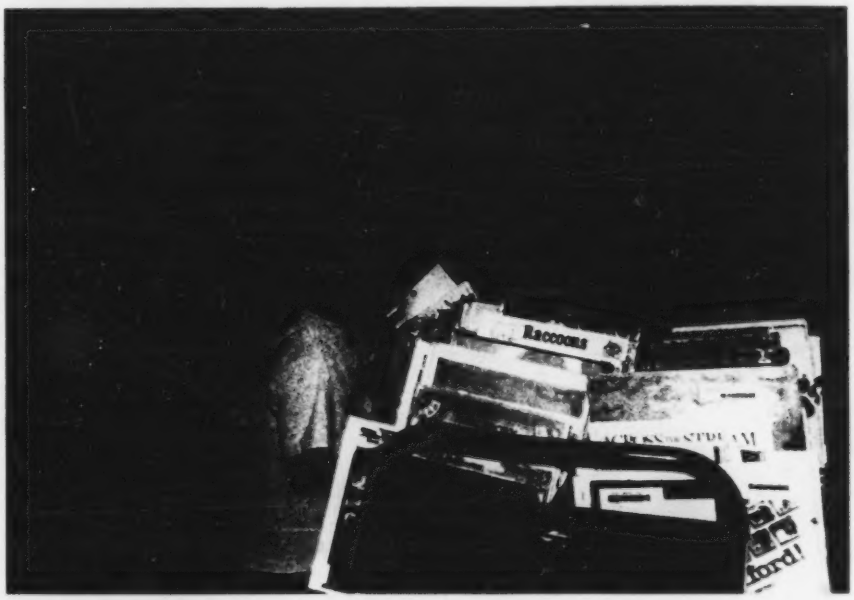
Accelerated Reader and Reading Renaissance Programs

The folders are beat up. But that is positive. They are used daily and are almost an extension of the children's arms. In each folder is a list of the books the student has read, how many pages each day, scores on the comprehension tests, how many points earned for each book, and the total number of points for the year. Students can look in their folders and know immediately how they are doing in reading. So can their teachers and parents.

Whenever the kids have free time, they take out their books and read. A steady parade goes to the school library to turn in a book, take the comprehension test on the computer, and then take out a new book. Even if the library is closed, classrooms have a considerable number of books from which the children can choose. No one is frustrated by waiting for the next official library period. The principal, the teachers, and other children ask, "Whatcha reading? Is it good? Have you read anything else by that author?" They all recommend books to each other and encourage each other as part of the friendly competition for points.

And *points* are the point. For every book the children read, they are awarded points based on the difficulty of the book and getting a certain number of comprehension questions right. And the encouraging thing is that little children can start earning points. Kindergartners can get points for looking at picture books and listening to story books that their parents read to them. When the kids get enough points, they get prizes. Prizes range from pencils to certificates to being principal for the day to taking a favorite school staff member out for a free lunch, depending on the number of points.



Searching for the perfect book.

This competition has increased reading. In one school, the number of points earned by the children rocketed from 7,000 the first year to 35,000 in the third year.

It does take some funding to buy the Accelerated Reader computer program and the supplemental Reading Renaissance program that provides teacher training, tests to ascertain student reading levels, classroom activities, and motivational tools. Grants also assure that the school and room libraries have the appropriate books. Not all books in a library are covered by Accelerated Reader's computerized comprehension tests. For those books, the teachers have to create the tests. Schools also have to figure out how to cover the costs of the prizes, either through grants or other donations.

The volunteer's role is to read together with the children to help them progress to higher scores in their comprehension tests and to improve their reading skills. In that way, students can read more difficult books and receive higher points.

The pride a child shows when she tells you she has earned 113 points is a clear sign that the program works. And, as she heads off to the library to get another book, you know that she will continue to read in the future.

Book in a Bag

The zip bags in a pile on the classroom shelf contain books, not lunches. These books, purchased with the Early Years funds, are in bags so they are protected when students take them out of the classroom. The idea is for these books to be available, even to very young children, to take home and read with parents or independently. Parents have guidelines on reading that the teacher has prepared, and they sign a card indicating their child has read the book either alone or with a parent. The students also read the books when they have free time at school, and they may also ask the GE volunteers to read with them. Because the kids have their favorites, there are a number of copies in the classroom of those books that everybody wants to read over and over. For some children, the books in the bags may be the only books for their age that they can read at home.

Economics Game

Third and fifth graders in Maryland are tested on their basic knowledge of economics, a subject that can be terrifying even for college students. So a few GE Elfun volunteers put together a short course to give students the basic economics they need to know to pass this section of their standardized social studies test. The course is helpful to the kids, and it also allows many volunteers to participate in the program, even if they are not available once a week for a full school year.

To make the instruction personal and involving, the volunteers have created two games, each lasting about an hour. The first, which calls for role-playing, demonstrates how GE makes products. The students take the roles of natural resources, human resources, capital resources, and finished products. By participating in this game, the students learn how the various aspects of production interrelate.

The second game is like a quiz show. The class is divided into teams. The teams have to answer questions about economics vocabulary, which is information they have already learned in class. For each right answer, the team receives a certain amount of "money." At the end of the quiz, the students can use the money they have won to "buy" a variety of GE products. Of course, a TV and VCR are highly prized purchases, but only one of each is available. As a result, the students learn about shortages of products and what shortages can do to prices. They also learn how to budget to get the most for their money.

Although the results of the first round of economic testing are not yet in, the school is very enthusiastic about having the volunteers return for another year. The kids are enthusiastic, too. At the end of the two-week program, one of the students wrote, "I really loved being a machine!" You know that this "machine" will remember her place in the economic hierarchy.

Fort Edward Free Library

The author explains to the children, kindergartners through third graders, what it means to write a book. Seated next to the author, the illustrator in turn shows the children how she goes about drawing an illustration for a book. The kids know the author's books well, having read many of them in class—many times. And the children have also taken some other books by the author from the school library to read at home. At the end of the presentation, each child will receive an autographed copy of one of the books, a treasure to keep forever. Maybe one of the children will grow up to be an author or illustrator, too.

Bringing children's authors to the Fort Edward Elementary School is just one of the activities supported in part by the GE grant to the Fort Edward Free Library. Coordinated jointly by a member of the library board and the reading specialist at the school, this program has made the most of its volunteers and money.

All aboard for a train trip.

With the help of volunteers, students at all levels of the elementary school have studied transportation. They have read about all methods of getting from one place to another, then chosen a trip that takes them around on many different forms of transportation. They have traveled by bus, train, foot, ski lift, boat, car, trolley, and escalator, to name a few. They then write reports about what they have learned and describe their particular trip.

Students also have an opportunity to visit a number of cultural centers. They read up on what they are going to see, go with GE volunteers to the centers, and write reports on what they have learned from the visits. For many students, it is the first time they have been to museums, the theater, or a concert.

The fourth graders learn through hands-on science activities with GE volunteers. For example, they now know why it is important to wear a helmet while riding a bike. The experiment involves a raw egg, which, like the human head, has a hard exterior and a vulnerable interior. The egg serves as an excellent example of what can happen to a human head when it hits a hard object.

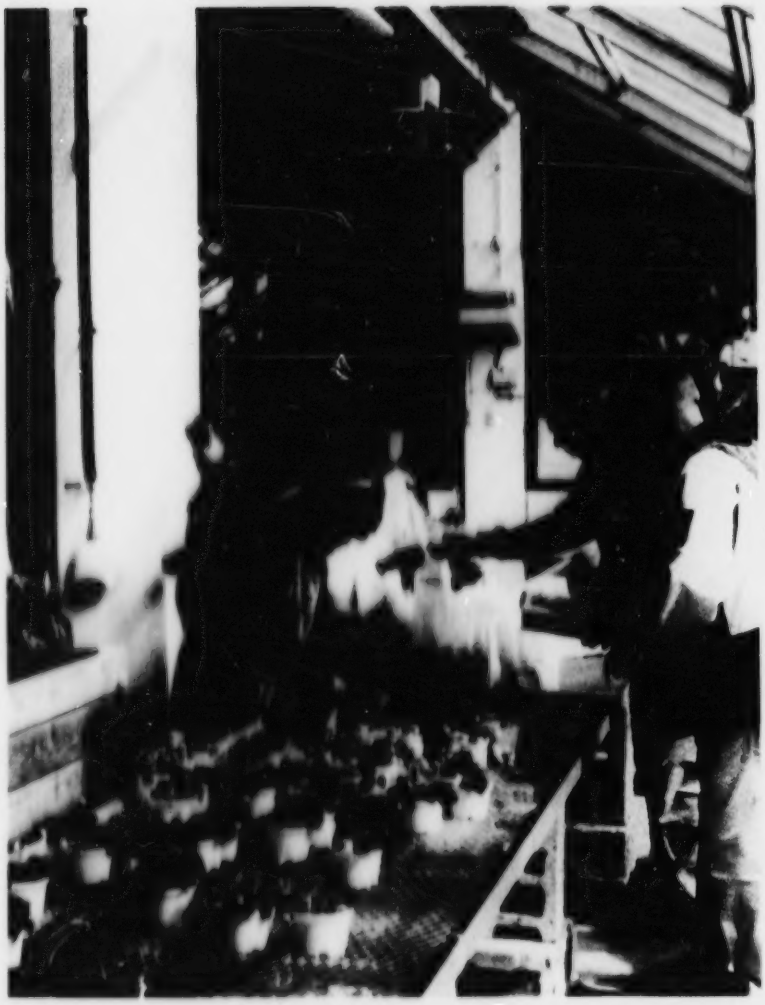
The volunteers hold a contest for fourth graders in which the students create a "crash helmet" for an egg. It is the culmination of a year of science activities. The students have already learned how to propose a hypothesis, do experiments, and summarize the results. By the time the contest comes around, they have learned how to revise their thinking and redo experiments through the STAR Labs (pages 24 and 41).

The contest rules are simple. Using materials they have at home, they have to put together a "helmet" that will protect an egg when it is dropped from various heights. The student whose egg is unbroken when dropped from the highest point is the winner. The drops, of course, are measured, and the highest drop is from the balcony of the cafeteria to the cafeteria floor.

The anticipation and suspense on the day of the contest is equal to the challenge of creating a helmet to protect an egg. Sometimes the principal gives students the chance to name their reward—which, in itself, may be the ultimate prize!

GET Smart

GET stands for GE Tutors. They read with the third- through fifth-grade students once a week, using books that students are reading for the Accelerated Reader Program, magazines, books for the Super Lit Quiz Bowl, or anything else that the children want to read. The volunteers encourage and guide students to read and prepare for the comprehension test they take for each Accelerated Reader book. They help the young children learn to figure out words from context, an important skill in reading throughout life. Volunteers spend half the time working with the reading program and half the time helping with homework. The program is scheduled at the end of the school day so that it doesn't interrupt class time and so that the students leave the school on a positive note.



Making change during the shamrock sale.

The Green Thumb Club

The greenhouse at the Cincinnati school, although relatively new, had been used mostly for dying cactuses. Then the GE volunteer, whose avocation is horticulture, stepped into the picture. She, along with a music teacher, revived the Green Thumb Club. The first thing the club did was plan how the greenhouse could be improved. With the help of a math teacher, they figured out the volume of the space, how much air needed to be moved to maintain the temperature, what size fan and vent the greenhouse would need to move that volume of air, and how much heat plants might need for the winter. The volunteer also realized that they needed worktables to be used for growing plants and seating for kids. A student assignment was to measure the tables, figure out how much wood was needed to make them usable, what other supplies they would need to rebuild the tables, and how much soil the new tables would hold. Then students, teachers, and volunteers helped build the classroom part of the greenhouse.

Even as all of this planning was going on, the students met after school to start growing some plants. Their first crop was shamrocks. They gave some to older residents of the neighborhood, and sold the rest. They made a

profit. It was a great incentive to grow some more plants. An even greater incentive was that their shamrocks won a prize at the Cincinnati Flower Show. That was recognition on a major scale.

Now, for the Christmas crop, the students grow bulbs that are ready to flower for the holidays. Shamrocks are for St. Patrick's Day. And garden crops are for the spring. Each child has to learn how to handle orders, inventory, and money. They learn about marketing and sales. They also learn about banking. And they made enough money to be able to buy soaker hoses and a timer for the grow tables the first year and a full irrigation system the second. The students measured and installed this professional system.

The grant money was used by the Green Thumb Club to buy the new air flow system and new supports for the growing tables, as well as some horticulture books for the library. The students have read about plants, horticulture, and what they might be able to do with their skills when they leave school. And the hot items when the students have a little free time are the volunteer's horticulture magazines.

In recognition of the students' good work, another local business has joined with the students in improving the grounds of the school, and the Cincinnati Park Board has donated a butterfly habitat. But nothing can match selling something that you have grown. Ask any gardener.

Literature Celebration Day

Authors and illustrators are invited to the school to describe how they work and to encourage students to write and draw. Authors read their books to the students, and other presenters offer programs to enrich student enjoyment of literature. The Literature Celebration Day can include talks by poets and local journalists, puppeteers, magicians, even Shakespearean plays for the older students. In many cases, the students also receive copies of books. Parents are invited to attend, and, if they can afford them, to purchase books for the library, classroom, and for home.

Mentoring

"What do you want to do today?" This is what most mentors say when they meet with their students. Together, they usually work on homework, read a book, discuss a subject they are both interested in, play a pen-and-ink word game, talk about what the mentor does at work, think about what the child might want to do in the future, practice English, edit a paper, practice the times table. You name it. Mentoring can be anything and everything.

Sometimes mentors work with their kids in the classroom. Then they take the lead from the teacher. In other cases, mentor and students get together after school on the day buses run late so children can take part in after-school activities. Then the world is their oyster. They can play checkers or Scrabble, create a new game, draw, read books of silly jokes to each other, practice computer skills, talk about their families, give each other advice, put together puzzles, talk about a movie, learn songs and plays, write stories for each other, introduce each other to new music and art. Most of the time, homework also fits in the plan.

Mentoring is such a wide-open activity that almost anything fits. But it takes training to do "almost anything" effectively. Most schools with mentoring programs have specific training for the mentors. The training can be led by someone from the school, the school system volunteer office, the local college, or the local GE Elfun chapter.

The major thing that mentors learn is how to get the children to do things for themselves. It is hard not to show students how to do something when they are having difficulty. It takes practice to learn to say, "What do you think you might do to figure this out?" And they learn how to keep just a little distance so that they don't end up in the middle of a personal problem.

The biggest part of the mentor's role, however, is to be there. For many students, a regular visit from a friend is one of the most educational experiences they can have.

Modem Mates

The computer chat room is busy. Students from a number of classes and schools are online. They don't necessarily know who they're chatting with because they are identified by the teacher's name only. But they act like fourth and fifth graders. They tease each other. They correct spelling and grammar. They ask questions. And when an adult joins in, they want to know who it is. Who is he, what does he do, why is he interested in Modem Mates? And when he has to get out of the school's chat room to go to another school, five fifth graders come galloping down the hall to find out who he is before he leaves. They don't know it, but these kids have been learning and teaching each other while they were having fun.

Communicating online is only a small part of Modem Mates. Most of it is connected to actual class work, and virtually every aspect includes writing as an integral part, even when the program is science and math.

For instance, Cat Labs, created by a fifth-grade teacher, teaches students how to use a spreadsheet that allows them to compare age, weight, body length, tail length, color of fur, eyes, pads, and sex of a given set of cats. Then each child writes a business letter to a veterinarian asking how to measure a cat. They use the advice to measure some of their own cats. They enter the results into spreadsheets to expand their data universe and compare their results with those of students at other schools. They read stories about cats and then write their own short stories and poems. And they write a persuasive essay on whether they believe the Cat Labs should be repeated for the following year's fifth graders. All of these activities are shared with students in other schools.

With more than 25 schools cur-

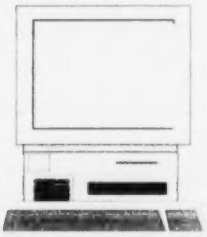
Modem Mates

These are some of my favorite things we did this year with modem mates.I liked the geography prodject because we tryed to name that school by useing reseach and then sending or answers to the school and ask them if they were that color.

I also liked chating over the computer and teaching the Skidmore students how to use the modem.

Altho those were fun the funnest was Charlie and the Chocolate Factory.Ben(my friend) and I were Agustus Gloop.He was a big kid with a big appetite.We sent letters to our penpals who were also reading it.We pretended to be our character and talk to them like they were one of the other characters.

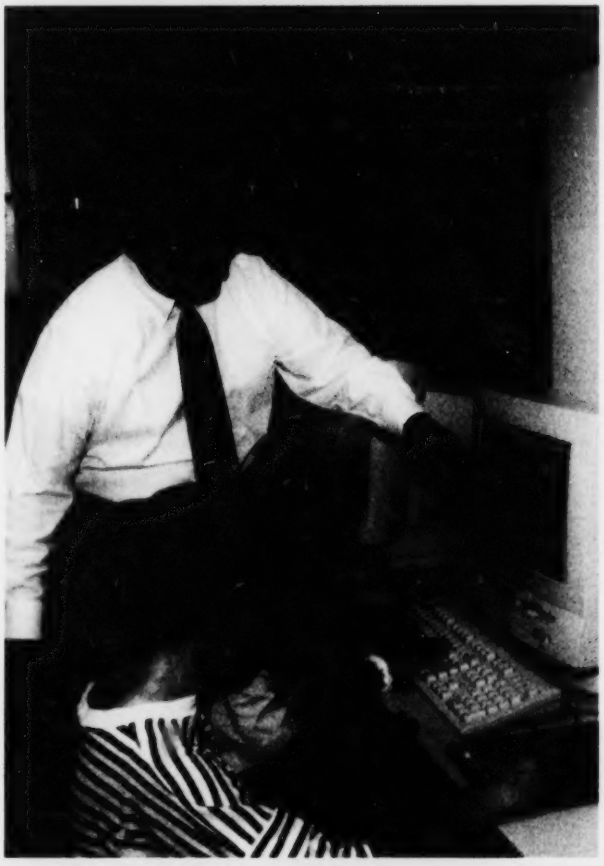
BY
Steve Madej



"I think the technology could be used anywhere from business to your home computer. Now this has prepared me for the future."

rently participating in Modem Mates, students also compete to figure out which school is which in the Geography Program. Students enter clues about their school based on the history and geography of their area. Schools use the names of colors to identify themselves, not their real names. At the end of the school year, all is revealed and kids in the various schools see if they chose the right school based on the clues. The clues teach the kids a great deal about the history and geography of their own neck of the woods.

"My favorite thing I liked doing was the geography projects. I enjoyed them 'cause it was hard and fun doing it. The hardest part was when we had to read the questions and find the answers to them on a map. The fun part was when we got to write the answers on the Modem Mates to the right school."



Learning how to read a stock chart.

Another program is Cemetery Sleuths. Students first learn about what they can expect to see at cemeteries, some of the vocabulary, the meaning of symbols and abbreviations, and how to gather data. Then they form teams that go to cemeteries to measure and survey gravestones, gather dates, names, family connections, epitaphs, symbols, and collect any other information they can find. Once they get back to school, they enter the data into spreadsheets. They attempt to answer a number of questions about causes of death, years in which there were high or low numbers of deaths, family size, and interrelationships. Students then write reports about their findings and share them with each other and with other schools.

Money also plays a part in the Modem Mates program. In the Stock Market Program, each class breaks into two teams. Some kids act as brokers. Each team is given a hypothetical stake of $50,000. Teams buy and sell from a selected group of stocks, paying brokers' fees and taxes. They get daily closing prices to use in making their buying and selling choices. At the end of a six-week period, students look at the record of all teams both in their own and other schools. In 1997, the winning team made $31,000 over a six-week period!

"I like the Chat Room. I liked this because I talked to kids I didn't know. We talked about our schools, and what their favorite food is, etc. By doing this, I learned about other schools and what their kids are like."

Mittens
Very fat
But very fast
Likes playing with bags
Zoom!

by Joshua Paniccia

To keep in touch with each other and to share knowledge between the schools, students write news and feature articles for the *Modem Mate Times*, an online newsletter that all students in the program can access. Kids write articles, edit them in class, then submit them to the newspaper editor for inclusion in the newsletter.

To encourage connections between schools even more, the students participate in an online pen pal program. Classes are paired and students are given pen pals from the matching class. At the end of the school year, pen pals meet each other and discover if their mental "picture" of each other created from the e-mails was accurate. It is one of the students' favorite activities.

GE Elfun volunteers help install and improve the computer systems and train the teachers and students to use the computers effectively. The grants are used to purchase compatible software for the various schools, to hold training sessions, and to create new programs planned by teachers. A small part is used to improve the central computer system.

"In Modem Mates, I liked doing the newspaper called The Modem Mate Times. *I got help writing one of the articles in it. It was a lot of fun to do."*

While this program is now used only within a one-county area, it would work well in any other part of the country. Just ask the kids.

"I liked the pen pals that we wrote to on the computer. By writing to them, I learned that you can learn a lot about someone by writing letters."

Mother Goose Asks "Why?"

The GE volunteer and the kids have just read *The Doorbell Rang*, a book about cookies. The students chimed in on the repeating phrase, "Then the doorbell rang." They know that each time the phrase occurs, the characters in the story will end up with fewer cookies because the cookies are being divided among more and more kids.

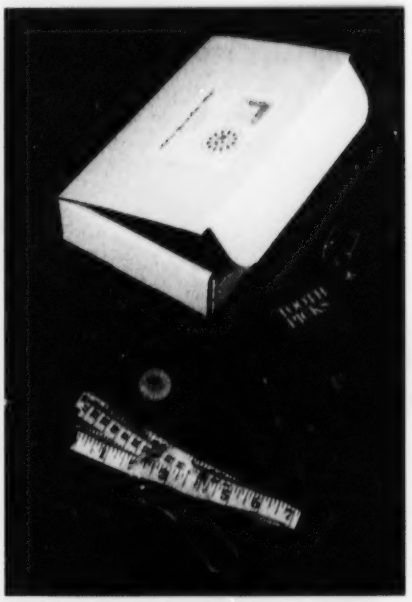
Now the students have cookies of their own—seven chocolate, four chocolate chip, two sugar, and one lemon. These second graders are about to learn fractions. How many cookies do they have total?

What part of the total are chocolate? What part are lemon? If you give someone your chocolate chip cookies, what part of the total will you have left?

The Doorbell Rang is one of eight books chosen by the Vermont Center for the Book for its science and math program, Mother Goose Asks "Why?" The program is aimed at first and second graders, and the program guide includes simple activities and experiments to go with the books. GE Elfun volunteers, who visit the schools about once a month, have taken the program considerably beyond the simple, however. Many are engineers and scientists, and they have created their own activities that tie in with the books.

Elfun volunteers have also taken the program to other grades. In one school, three chemists share volunteer duties in a kindergarten. After every Mother Goose class, the students write a thank you, in their own invented spelling, to their scientist for the day. (The teacher thoughtfully includes a translation.) And while the experiments for kindergartners are pretty simple, the kids understand far more than the volunteers had expected.

Purchase of the books, teacher's guide, and packages of materials for the experiments are funded by the grant. Right now, the same books are used for kindergarten, first, and second grades, which is great for kids who love to hear books read many times. However, the Vermont Center for the Book is in the process of creating another program based on environmental books. This will bring new books and ideas to students who have used the same books at various grades.



Equipment unpacked for the experiments.

Of course, variety can also come from doing different experiments. And with GE volunteers who experiment for a living, that is part of the fun!

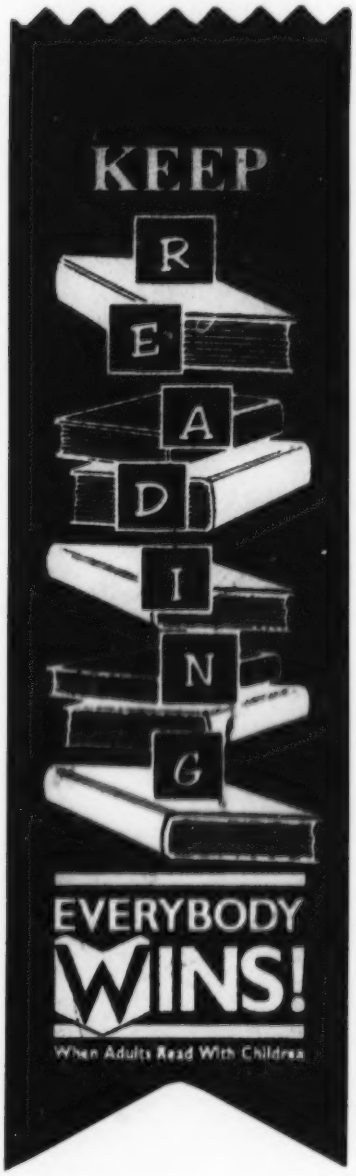
Power Lunch

The first person you see when you walk in New York City Public School 111 is the security guard. But the second person you see is the Power Lunch coordinator. She reminds students that today is a Power Lunch day and their Power Lunch partner will be there at first or second lunch period. Or she tells them that the day has been changed. She also spends the morning calling the volunteers to let them know that the child they work with is absent or the day must be changed because of a field trip. While the volunteers are the body of the program, the coordinator is its heart.

Power Lunch was created by the Everybody Wins Foundation as a school program in which volunteers from the community come to the school to read to students once each week. Because the creators did not want to pull students from class for the program and because volunteers found it easiest to spend their lunch hours reading, Power Lunch was born.

At the Hell's Kitchen school, more than 70 GE volunteers participate, along with many volunteers from other companies. The volunteers often bring the books

with them, although sometimes the students and volunteers choose the books together. Reading is not all that they do. They also discuss what is going on in class, talk about what they did for the weekend, play pen-and-ink word games, and generally act like friends. This regular contact is important for the students who often have little continuity in their lives. In fact, they are willing to give up their recess to spend time with their Power Lunch pals.



The coordinator is busy all morning in preparation for the volunteers. She receives calls from volunteers who must reschedule, sets up the lists of those who will be participating for the day, takes the lists to each classroom teacher to release those students, and she decides which classrooms will be used for Power Lunch for the day. Students selected to participate in the program are released early so they can take their partners to the cafeteria to get lunch before the rest of the class. Teachers take turns allowing their rooms to be used for the Power Lunch. The coordinator walks around during Power Lunch to make it easy for the volunteers to do their jobs by offering suggestions, reminding everyone that time is about up, and making sure that the classrooms are cleaned up before the classes return.

Unlike most programs, the grant pays for the volunteer coordinator. However, the coordinator's role is imperative in making a very large volunteer effort run smoothly.

You know the program is valid and valuable when you watch students and volunteers connect at a Power Lunch. The little first and second graders hug their partners unabashedly. The sophisticates in the upper grades give them little presents of drawings. But even the sophisticates have a huge grin when they see their partners walk in the door. It is returned. And often as they are heading off to read, a small hand finds a bigger hand.

Celebrating reading at lunch.

Science and Reading to Go!

A fourth-grade boy sits at the table he shares with three other students, totally engrossed in a book about inventors. He is looking at the pictures and reading about the methods the inventors used and the things they created. Thomas Edison, Henry Ford, Harvey Firestone, and many others grab his attention. The intent look on his face says it all: He wants to be an inventor.

The book is part of the Science and Reading To Go! kit. Earlier in the year, the students in this classroom had worked with materials from the kit to make a two-way light switch with the guidance of a GE Elfun volunteer. They had found making a regular switch too simple a task, so the volunteer gave them the problem of figuring out how to create a two-way switch on their own using paper clips, wires, batteries, a flashlight bulb, index cards, and brass fasteners. Students worked in teams of four. They recorded their findings and added them to their science journals.

Some teams came up with ideas quickly, while others needed some help. Like scientists in the lab, they shared their findings while adding new twists that made things work better. By the time the session was ending, one student was still attempting a different method. He was trying all of the possibilities that he could think of, but even so the light his two-way switch generated was very dim. He changed batteries, wires, and connectors. Finally, he had to put the equipment away because it was time to go home. If the school bell hadn't been about to ring, he would have figured out what needed to be done to make his connections work.

Science and Reading To Go! was created by the Anderson Oconee Pickens HUB, a resource center for math and science education serving three counties in the rural upstate of South Carolina. Located on the campus of Clemson University, the AOP HUB develops science and mathematics programs for use by local elementary and secondary schools. The program kits include numerous experiments, the equipment needed to carry them out, and books—both nonfiction and fiction—to get third- through fifth-grade children reading about what they have been doing.

Teachers in these rural schools are happy to get volunteers to help in facilitating the students' experiments. And of course the kids love to have volunteers in the classroom. Someone who will listen to you, encourage you, teach you without the weight of being the person in charge. What more could a child want?

Smyrna-Moore Mentoring and Tutoring Program

The eighth grade in this Louisville school is unusual in a number of ways. All of the students are repeating the grade. Some are close to the legal dropout age. And the class is in the high school, not in a middle school.

GE Elfun volunteers are spending time with these students so they can have another chance. The volunteers help the eighth graders study and discover a world outside their homes and the classroom. And—in what may be the

Mentoring means giving someone a lift.

most valuable thing they do—the volunteers guide the eighth graders when they, in turn, tutor younger, at-risk students in elementary school.

These eighth graders from Moore High School are helping students at the Smyrna Elementary School across the campus to develop their reading skills using a series of books that are tied to the arts. (The books were bought with the grant money.) Artists, both performing and visual, come to Smyrna to demonstrate their skills. And the elementary school students also visit galleries and performances to see the artists now familiar to them, often with their eighth-grade mentors and the Elfun volunteers.

One of the other outside activities is a dinner cruise on the *Star of Louisville* riverboat. Even though most of these students have grown up near the Ohio River, the cruise is usually their first opportunity to ride on a riverboat. The Smyrna-Moore program also sponsors a fishing program. Volunteers teach the kids how to fish and the importance of protecting the waterways as a source of food and recreation. The look on the face of a young child with a "first fish"—even if it is small—makes the whole program worthwhile!

What is really remarkable about the program is the transformation of many of the students. Before the program came into being, eighth-grade student attendance was spotty at best. Once the eighth graders had mentors and then became responsible themselves for tutoring younger students, they discovered that people were counting on them. They came to school. They did their own work so they would know enough to be able to help the younger students. And in a few cases, the eighth graders did so well that they not only passed their tests, but they were able to take summer classes and catch up with their peers who had not had to repeat a grade.

What about the younger children? They are learning to read. They are making friends with older students. And they hope to be tutors when they get to be eighth graders.

Looking up to a tutor.

The program has increased the reading scores of the students enrolled. It has provided them with a mentor to look up to and has improved their self-image. My students enjoy the program and look forward to the days they meet.

—Principal, Smyrna Elementary

My students benefitted by their participation in the Smyrna-Moore Mentoring and Tutoring Program in several ways. One of the most pronounced improvements is the increase in self-esteem. They have developed a special bond with their Moore mentors. All of my students in the program have shown a significant improvement in reading this year.

—Primary teacher, Smyrna Elementary

STAR

Science Technology And Reading

The fourth-grade student was having problems. He had a hard time with reading. Because of learning difficulties, he was disruptive. Nothing got through to him, no matter how hard the teacher and the other students tried to help. Then the GE Elfun volunteer demonstrated a hands-on experiment with electricity. When the boy put together a couple of batteries, wires, and a light bulb, it was as if a light bulb was turning on for him. He hadn't worked with electricity before, but it made sense to him.

Suddenly, he was the one who knew how to do things. He could help the other kids, those who had been helping him up to that time. He wanted to read about electricity. And with support, he did. He became comfortable in the classroom. He couldn't wait for the volunteer to come so they could do more things, both with electricity and the other experiments.

Although this case is unusual, many students do get turned on by doing science experiments. The STAR Labs, created by Reading Is Fundamental, tap into this excitement of actually doing experiments to get children to read. Each lab is enhanced with a series of topic-related books that are kept in the classroom for the kids to read. Some are nonfiction and tell more about the topics the students are learning—such as electricity or invention. Some of the experiments tie in with fiction—such as the Mystery Lab that gets students taking mysteries out of the library in droves. The point is that fourth and fifth graders are reading—both girls and boys—and they are reading books different from the sports books, horse stories, etc., that the typical student reads.

The STAR program is a series of eight labs that explore topics in the natural and physical sciences aimed at fourth- and fifth-grade students. At the beginning of each lab, the class reads a story that relates to the idea of the experiments to follow. Then the volunteer in conjunction with the teacher demonstrates a number of experiments. Some can be done right in the classroom, but others take the students outside or on a field trip. The cost of the equipment is minimal. Most experiments require materials that are available at home or are already at the school. One of the biggest expenses is replacing batteries, a situation certainly familiar to any parent.

The volunteers usually come into the classroom every week and work with the students on the experiments. They may show them how to do something. They may just set the kids up and let them loose. They always talk with the students about keeping records of their experiments. They also make sure the write-up includes the hypothesis, the different ways of testing a hypothesis, how the experiment was conducted, and the results. Volunteers also stress safety. Creativity is at the heart of good science, along with knowledge, courage, and willingness to stick to it until you get a result. Students see all of these qualities demonstrated by the volunteers, and they see them come into play in their own attempts to get results.

The volunteer's role doesn't leave the teacher out. In fact, most teachers prepare the class for the science they will do with the volunteer. Because the experiments can go on after the volunteer leaves, the teacher has to assure that the students continue in the same manner in which they started and be able to answer the kids' questions. And the teacher can help the students find books related to the experiments that are appropriate to their interests and reading skills.

Most schools do a maximum of four labs during the school year. If the school has sufficient volunteers, the others can be completed in fifth grade. In some cases where volunteers travel a great deal as part of their jobs, two of them may team up to work with one class, taking turns and traveling without guilt. In many cases, the travelers pick up souvenirs that relate to their experiments, and they send postcards so the kids know where they are and can follow them on the map. For children who may never have traveled outside their hometown, this world view is a revelation. It also leads many to read about the places where the volunteers have traveled.

Depending on the funding that is available, the children may receive a book of their choice to keep for each lab, one each semester, or they may just get one for the year. These books can become prized possessions and

Safety is important in scientific experiments.

reminders of the experiments and volunteers.

This program works very well with volunteers since many elementary school teachers are not comfortable with science. And the grants are important. The materials, even though relatively low cost, must be replenished each year, and the books given to the students must be replaced. But the experiments have been tested and modified so that they are relatively easy and safe to perform.

And the kids do respond, to the point where three fourth-grade teachers said, "The real result is that they are excited. They are reading. They pay attention. And many of them who didn't know what a scientist was at the beginning of the year now want to be scientists when they grow up!"

Super Lit Quiz Bowl

Four teams, each consisting of one student from each of the third-grade classes, are competing in front of their classmates, parents, volunteers, school staff, and even some members of the media. The teams, in turn, get a question. If they answer it right, they get another chance for extra points. Questions are short and content rich. Answers usually require only a few words.

At the start of the quiz, students are reminded that it is important to confer with other members of the team before answering. But when you are in third grade, it is hard not to blurt out an answer. It only takes one wrong answer before the virtue of patience becomes apparent.

On subsequent days, the students from the fourth and fifth grades learn the same lessons and feel the same exhilaration.

For the semester prior to the public presentation, the students in third, fourth, and fifth grade study hard. Each grade reads the five books chosen for the Quiz Bowl for their level. Then students talk them over with the volunteers, take quizzes in class, and complete tests. Class work includes discussions of the bigger points of the book and essays on themes.

The Quiz Bowl offers a very different opportunity for students to show off their knowledge. Students must answer in front of their peers, out loud, not on paper. Each class practices in teams for the Quiz Bowl, but the students chosen to participate have done the best academically overall.

During the Super Lit Quiz Bowl, the team with the most points changed regularly. In the end, winning was a matter of only a

few points. And the glory fell on all the classes. Each team won a prize, paid for by the grant, with the winners getting special prizes. And the winning preparatory teams in the classrooms also won prizes.

Answering questions correctly and winning an award are only some of the benefits. Students learn teamwork, cooperation, and listening skills. Probably the most important reward is improved self-esteem. Parents, teachers, and the students are so keen on Quiz Bowl, they plan to have *two* Super Lit Quiz Bowls with a total of ten books next year!

Tae Kwon Do

One of the staff members from GE in Cincinnati is an expert at Tae Kwon Do. He is using his own time to work with students at the local school twice a week, teaching this martial art and, at the same time, teaching self-discipline. Students are referred to the class by their teachers so they can learn more about themselves and what they are capable of doing. The volunteer's training program is a source of power and peace to these kids who, without this class, may not have much of either of those strengths. And with that strength comes improved academic achievement.

Troll Multicultural Program

Each Saturday during the summer, volunteers and students get together at the Hendersonville, North Carolina, Boys and Girls Club to read and learn. They are using the Troll Multicultural Program, a commercial program that introduces students to four cultures. It includes stories about Africans, Asians, Native Americans, and Hispanics. Children, who are referred to the program by their teachers, read the stories with the volunteers for the first hour. In the second hour of the program, an expert comes to the Boys and Girls Club to talk about the culture and aspects of that culture's life, such as food, traditions, arts, and crafts. Children participate in related activities from the Troll Program, planned and prepared for them by the educational director of the Boys and Girls Club. They make masks, prepare and eat foods from different cultures, and participate in celebrations. Nothing makes a culture come to life like actually becoming a part of it.

Reading about a culture, and the kids' masks that bring it to life.

Program Information

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Accelerated Reader and Reading Renaissance Programs

Computerized reading management program and support materials

Grades: K–5

How it works: Students choose books from a list appropriate to their grade and reading level. After reading a book, the student takes a test. To get points for reading the books, students must answer a specified number of questions correctly. Students record their own progress in a folder, listing title, pages read per day, and scores on the reading questions. Assessment is oral, with the teacher asking questions, and computer driven, which students complete independently.

Why it is successful: Sixth graders have shown a 20 percent increase in reading level. Students are motivated to read because they experience success. They earn points for each book when they pass the test. They raise their level of reading ability and feel responsible for their own growth. The school coordinator works with the students. GE volunteers are a major boost to the program. The library is available to students on an expanded schedule and many books have been purchased with the grant to support the program. Support from the principal and the teachers is essential to success.

Teacher training: Workshops in Accelerated Reader and Reading Renaissance Programs are provided with district funds.

GE volunteers: Strong support and commitment comes from the GE Elfun volunteers in class and after school. Reading to students and talking with them about the books provides the incentive to improve their literacy. Volunteers are also trained for intervention when students have difficulty reading. One example is to work with students in vocabulary development.

Grant uses: Money is used to purchase the Accelerated Reader and Reading Renaissance program materials, including the books, software, and teacher materials, and the incentives for implementation of the Reading Renaisssance Program.

Sites and Contacts

Carver Elementary School
515 N. Cashua Drive
Florence, SC 29501

IXL Elementary School
RTE #4
Arkansas, KS 67005

Lowell Elementary School
1411 Loomis
Winfield, KS 67156

Lubeck Elementary School
Rural Route #3
Box 177
Parkersburg, WV 26101

Smyrna Elementary School
6401 Outer Loop
Louisville, KY 40228

Timrod Elementary School
1901 Old Marion Highway
Florence, SC 29506

Wrightsboro Elementary School
2716 Castle Hayne Road
Wilmington, NC 28401

Accelerated Reader Program
Advantage Learning Systems, Inc.
P.O. Box 8036
Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54495-8036

Reading Renaissance Program
Institute for Academic Excellence
University Research Park
P.O. Box 45016
Madison, WI 53744-5016

Book in a Bag

A book in a plastic bag goes home

Grades: K–2

How it works: Students check out paperback books in plastic bags and take them home to read and return them to school. Besides reading at home, they read the books before and after school and during breaks. They also take home guidelines that help parents read the books with their children. Parents sign a card indicating they have read the guidelines and that they will read the books with their children. The school stocks multiple copies of the more popular books for several students to read at the same time. Teachers read them, too!

Why it is successful: Students are always carrying a book with them because they like to read and discuss their current reading with other students and their teachers.

Teacher training: No training is necessary, but teachers create guidelines for parents to support their efforts to read with their children and to sustain the school's efforts to encourage reading at home. Parents expect their children to have a "book in a bag" to continue the reading process at all times.

GE volunteers: The volunteers read with and to the students, supporting their goals to increase literacy.

Grant uses: The money is used to purchase the paperbacks in bags.

Site
Wrightsboro Elementary School
2716 Castle Hayne Road
Wilmington, NC 28401

Economics Game

Learning principles of economics in a fun way

Grades: 3 and 5

How it works: Students learn the basic principles of economics to help them succeed in their standardized social studies test. The vehicles for the learning process are two games created by the volunteers. The games give the students a frame of reference. For example, the volunteers use their real-life jobs to create models for practice and discussion. With one game, students learn all aspects of developing consumer products. With the other game, a quiz show, students practice their understanding of economics. They play as teams and win prize money that enables them to "purchase" prizes. This teaches them purchasing power, budgeting, and the value of money.

Why it is successful: Students are highly motivated to learn when the process is fun and engaging. The school and the volunteers are enthusiastic and eager to continue this type of learning experience.

Teacher training: None is needed.

GE volunteers: With the opportunity to share their work by example, the volunteers can make much information available to students. In addition, a number of volunteers can participate who might not otherwise have the time.

Grant uses: The funds cover the minimal costs for poster board and color copies.

Site
College Gardens Elementary School
1700 Yale Place
Rockville, MD 20850

Fort Edward Free Library

The library is a partner with the school in a variety of literacy projects

Grades: K–6

How it works: Library and school work together. The school taps the resources of the community and helps the community get involved with the school. Parents, teachers, and volunteers read with students at the library and at school. Literacy becomes a focal point for the community. In the school, library books are integrated with the math, science, and reading curricula. Learning is enhanced with field trips to local and distant places, and with author, illustrator, and storyteller visits, among other activities. In addition to reading, students summarize their experiences in reports, write letters, keep journals, prepare charts, and conduct experiments.

Why it is successful: Enthusiasm and coordination of all involved in the goal to educate the students keep the program moving and make it highly efficient. There is strong school support and effort by the teachers and coordinator to maximize the funding with the community services and volunteer contributions.

Teacher training: No training is necessary, but much cooperation and support from the school staff is needed to develop and sustain school-community activities.

GE volunteers: Reading to students, working on literature-related activities, accompanying students on field trips, and speaking to students about the concepts in their curricula are some of the volunteers' contributions.

Grant uses: Money is used to purchase books for the library and fund the trips and author visits as well as other activities.

Site and Contact

Fort Edward Elementary School
220 Broadway
Fort Edward, NY 12828

Fort Edward Free Library
23 East Street
Fort Edward, NY 12828

GET Smart

GE volunteers are tutors to students

Grades: 3–5

How it works: Volunteers work with students, tutoring them in homework and reading books with them for the Super Lit Quiz Bowl and for the Accelerated Reader Program. They coach students as they prepare for reading tests for Accelerated Reader books. The tutors also provide strong support to the students in learning reading skills related to increasing vocabulary.

Why it is successful: Students look forward to the reading and homework sessions with the tutors, who have a very positive impact on them and their success.

Teacher training: No training is needed.

GE volunteers: Working with students at the end of the school day gives the volunteers uninterrupted time with the students. The volunteers spend half their time with the reading program and half the time on homework.

Grant uses: Grants are used for the Accelerated Reader Program.

Site
Wrightsboro Elementary School
2716 Castle Hayne Road
Wilmington, NC 28401

The Green Thumb Club

Learning skills through a greenhouse program

Grades: 3–6

Site
Chase Elementary School
4151 Turrill Street
Cincinnati, OH 45223

How it works: The Green Thumb Club has 18–20 student members in grades 3 through 6. They meet one day each week for 1 to 1½ hours after school in the school's greenhouse. Students raise and sell plants. In the process, they learn science and math skills, how to write business letters—for example, to seed companies—and how to solve problems in growing plants and having a business. They discuss their progress and problems at their greenhouse meetings. Teachers use the greenhouse projects to teach science and math curricula. For example, students learn about measurement to measure soil, water, and plants. They study photosynthesis to learn how light is used to grow plants. They learn about air flow and temperature and the effects on plants. Teachers are using these activities to meet the state competency requirements. Practical applications in the greenhouse can be graded.

Why it is successful: The greenhouse is a very different and exciting learning environment. Students learn how to run a successful business and they see the results. They learn how to make decisions and how to work cooperatively with others for a common goal. At their plant sales, they learn how to communicate effectively with the public. They have won blue ribbons for their plants and managed profitable plant sales. The community has responded. The Green Thumb Club has attracted great community support and donations. The Cincinnati Park Board donated a butterfly habitat, bank volunteers have become mentors, and the local florist and others have donated materials.

Teacher training: No training is needed.

GE volunteers: The Club started producing crops in the greenhouse when a GE volunteer with a keen interest in teaching horticulture got involved. She saw the greenhouse not only as an opportunity to help students learn to raise flowers and plants, but also as a way of teaching students a variety of skills. GE volunteers participate in supporting the students' work in the greenhouse, discussing the plant projects, and helping with the maintenance of the greenhouse.

Grant uses: Money is used to buy many books for the library as well as for materials such as seeds and tools. The money was also used to repair and improve the greenhouse by installing air flow fans and growing tables.

Literature Celebration Day

Authors and other guest speakers celebrate literature

Grades: K–5

How it works: This is an extension of the Accelerated Reader Program. People from all walks of life—magicians, puppeteers, and authors—come to school to celebrate literature with the students. An author, for example, will read his or her book to students and talk about the process of writing the book. Guests are invited to the classroom to participate in the celebration of the literature.

Why it is successful: Students, teachers, and volunteers enjoy the program for visiting authors and guest speakers. The program enriches the students' reading experiences and adds a special dimension to their knowledge of literature.

Teacher training: No training is required.

GE volunteers: Volunteers read to the students one hour a week and help them celebrate the literature with the authors and guest speakers.

Grant uses: The money is used to purchase the books and to pay some of the authors and other guest speakers.

Site
Wrightsboro Elementary School
2716 Castle Hayne Road
Wilmington, NC 28401

Mentoring

Supporting students in a variety of ways

Grades: 1–6

How it works: Adult volunteers meet with students for a variety of reasons. Their meetings may be a time to do homework or discuss after-school activities. The students' needs are the driving force for the mentors' presence, although academics take the lead. Mentors have many roles, not the least of which is to be a good friend.

Why it is successful: Mentoring satisfies many student needs, both academic and personal. It is usually unstructured so that the student and the mentor can engage in conversation, something many students are lacking in their lives. In some situations, the mentor is the only non-parent adult in the student's life. For this reason, mentors contribute in major ways to students' needs for a role model and help build self-esteem. And mentors have the satisfaction of a very positive response from students.

Teacher training: None is needed.

GE volunteers: Training for mentors is usually a program presented to mentors by the school or other organization. Some important skills for mentors include learning to help students be motivated, to develop a positive self-esteem, to be independent thinkers. And mentors are always good listeners!

Grant uses: Funds are used for training and for materials or programs that mentors and students can do together.

Sites

Chase Elementary School
4151 Turrill Street
Cincinnati, OH 45223

College Gardens Elementary School
1700 Yale Place
Rockville, MD 20850

Modem Mates

Computers in classrooms are connected to a number of schools to expand learning and develop literacy

Grades: K–6

How it works: Students and teachers at county schools use computers in their classwork to learn math, science, and reading. Teachers assign projects and experiments that require teamwork and independent study. Students work with each other and with other classes on the assignments, using the computer to explore, evaluate, analyze, and compile information.

Why it is successful: At first, teachers were using the computers with standard curricula. When they realized how many teaching and learning benefits came from working with technology, they developed new curricula, creating software programs for math, science, reading, economics, and language instruction. Now, teachers are exchanging programs and communicating with other schools via the computer. Students use the technology to produce valid and successful projects. They exchange information with students in other schools and learn about their areas' history, geography, and environment. Using the computer to learn motivates them to learn on their own and to learn more from others.

Teacher training: Teachers learn how to use the computers and software over two years with after-school and summer training.

GE volunteers: Technology support is key to the success of Modem Mates. GE people provide the software training, the hardware installation, and the day-to-day support for school staff and students.

Grant uses: Money pays teacher training stipends, substitute teachers, and software to run computer programs.

Sites

Charlton Heights Elementary School
170 Stage Road
Ballston Lake, NY 12019

Rosendale Elementary School
2455 Rosendale Road
Niskayuna, NY 12309

Mother Goose Asks "Why?"

Books and activities in a kit

Grades: pre-K–2

How it works: There are eight books with related activities and materials in this kit created by the Vermont Center for the Book. A volunteer reads a book aloud to students. Then volunteer or teacher and students conduct a science or math activity. Students may also read the book themselves or the entire class reads the book together. Students read and write about the projects and become motivated to learn more about science as well as to read more. The emphasis is on reading good literature and learning to enjoy it as well as to learn the science concepts that are developed from the literature. The class leader (volunteer or teacher) uses activities in the kit that relate to the book, but may also create others.

Why it is successful: Students love to have the GE volunteers come in to read to them and they enjoy the activities. It does not take teachers much time to plan the additional projects. Teachers integrate the curriculum with the Mother Goose books and activities. Student scores in science have improved dramatically for a few reasons, not the least of which is the support from volunteers with the Mother Goose program.

Teacher training: The Vermont Center for the Book gives one full day of training with the kits and materials. Volunteers talk with teachers to plan the class projects.

GE volunteers: One hour each week, GE volunteers read to students and engage them in science or math activities. Teachers and volunteers organize appropriate activities. One very keen GE volunteer has studied emergent literacy to maximize his understanding and connection with students. All the volunteers enjoy their time in the classes and teachers see many benefits for the students.

Grant uses: Money is used to purchase the Mother Goose kits. Each kit includes the books, the activities, and the materials needed for the experiments. The grant also supports the replacement items and additional copies of the books.

Sites and Contact

Christ the King School
Killington Road
Rutland, VT 05701

Waterford-Halfmoon Elementary School
125 Middletown Road
Waterford, NY 12188

Mother Goose Asks "Why?"
Vermont Center for the Book
P.O. Box 441
Chester, VT 01543

Power Lunch

Volunteers read to students at lunch

Grades: K–7

How it works: Volunteers and students read a book together once each week while having lunch. The lunch period was selected so that students would not miss their class time. Teachers identify students to participate with the volunteers in the Power Lunch. The volunteers and students choose books to read and discuss, and sometimes volunteers bring their own books to read to the students. A school coordinator organizes the volunteers and their student partners for the lunch meetings, arranges the schedules with the volunteers and teachers, and keeps everyone on schedule. The Power Lunch program was developed through the Everybody Wins Foundation. The Everybody Wins staff in New York recruit the volunteers from local businesses and give the training class. The Boston Partners in Education, an independent nonprofit organization, directs the Power Lunch in the Boston area.

Why it is successful: Enthusiasm and motivation are the results when students and volunteers come together week after week. Some students are never absent on their Power Lunch day! They come to depend on their meetings with volunteers for the opportunity to have someone read aloud to them, to discuss literature, to enjoy reading, and to help them improve their literacy. The volunteers provide social interaction for the students and become role models.

Teacher training: None is needed.

GE volunteers: Volunteers motivate students to read beyond their school assignments and the Power Lunch. Volunteers enjoy and value their contributions to the students' literacy goals. They receive training from Everybody Wins before they begin the Power Lunch sessions. This includes becoming familiar with ways to interact with students and learning goals and expectations of the Power Lunch program.

Grant uses: The grant pays the salary for a school coordinator and the administrators of the local Everybody Wins organization.

Sites and Contacts

Drewicz Elementary School
34 Hood Street
Lynn, MA 01905

K.R. Smith Elementary School
2025 Clarice Drive
San Jose, CA 95122

Madison Elementary School
376 Wayne Street
Bridgeport, CT 06606

Public School 111
440 West 53rd Street
New York, NY 10019

Power Lunch
Boston Partners in Education
44 Farnsworth Street
Boston, MA 02210

Power Lunch
Everybody Wins Foundation, Inc.
165 East 56th St.
New York, NY 10022

Science and Reading to Go!

Inquiry-based science kits with correlated reading materials

Grades: 3–5

How it works: The program features science kits and age-appropriate reading materials correlated to science concepts. The kits were developed by the National Science Resources Center and the Smithsonian Institution. Currently, there are two kits per grade for grades 3, 4, and 5. Each kit is designed for 8 weeks of lessons. The kits include the plans and materials to conduct the experiments and the books that support the science experiments. Students are introduced to the science topic with the book(s). During and after the science experiments, students read the recommended literature as well as any other appropriate materials.

Why it is successful: The science experiments are challenging, yet age appropriate, and foster success. Teachers and students benefit from doing experiments in class. Students are more interested in science and do more reading of science-related texts.

Teacher training: The Anderson Oconee Pickens HUB (one of 13 resource centers in the state and the central organization for this program founded by the South Carolina State Systemic Initiative and the National Science Foundation) gives three days of professional development workshops, focusing on inquiry-based science, developing reading skills through science, and developing strategies for family involvement.

GE volunteers: In class, volunteers work with the students to do the experiments, to give background on the science principles, and to provide the support and incentive students need to understand and enjoy learning science.

Grant uses: Money is used to buy the kits and the replacement items as needed as well as some of the science-related books.

Site and Contact
Tamassee Elementary School
P.O. Box 68
Tamassee, SC 29686

Science and Reading to Go!
Anderson Oconee Pickens HUB
Department 1910
Sears House #3 Highway 93
Clemson, SC 29634-1910

Smyrna-Moore Mentoring and Tutoring Program

Literacy, tutoring, and mentoring between adult volunteers, high school students, and elementary students

Grades: Elementary and high school

How it works: Adult volunteers work with repeating eighth-grade students once each week, helping them improve their reading skills, giving them more opportunities to learn outside the classroom, and mentoring them. In turn, the eighth-grade students work with students in the elementary grades, reading to them and working with them on their reading skills. The eighth graders become tutors to the younger students, helping many at-risk children build their self-esteem and their reading skills so they can avoid being repeat eighth graders themselves. Student meetings are held twice weekly for one hour. Both elementary- and eighth-grade students are also taken to cultural enrichment activities.

Why it is successful: Principals and teachers report great improvements in reading ability and reading scores as well as greatly increased self-esteem of all students involved. As tutors, eighth graders improve their own academics, self-discipline, self-esteem, and responsibility level. Other benefits include increased attendance by all students and positive relationships between the young students and their older tutors.

Teacher training: Teachers and literacy specialists recommend reading strategies to be used by the eighth-grade students. Eighth-grade students are trained to conduct the reading sessions with elementary students.

GE volunteers: Volunteers receive a two-hour training session, discussing the activities, purposes for mentoring, and getting tips. In addition to the weekly visits to the school, volunteers accompany students to activities and events that support their school studies and give them the opportunities they might not have otherwise.

Grant uses: In 1996–97, a new series of books on the arts was purchased with grant funds. The grant also covered the costs of bringing performing and visual artists to the school to work with the children and to take them to cultural events.

Sites and Contact

Moore High School
6415 Outer Loop
Louisville, KY 40228

Smyrna Elementary School
6401 Outer Loop
Louisville, KY 40228

Smyrna-Moore Tutoring and Mentoring Program
The Volunteer Talent Center
Jefferson County Public Schools
330 South Hubbards Lane
Louisville, KY 40207

STAR — Science Technology And Reading

Eight science lab kits of experiments and related books

Grades: 3–6

How it works: These eight science labs, developed by Reading Is Fundamental, Inc., provide hands-on experiments in the natural and physical sciences. Students are introduced to the science topics through fiction and nonfiction literature selected to accompany the STAR Labs. Other literature is suggested to extend the learning experience and to motivate students to read. Interdisciplinary activities extend the lab experience across the curricula. Volunteers help students conduct the experiments.

Why it is successful: Students keenly interested in the science experiments are very motivated to read books about the concepts. Students who never liked to read are reading. They are finding science more interesting and look forward to the next science period, to which the GE volunteers bring their experience and knowledge. Volunteers enjoy seeing students learn with enthusiasm.

Teacher training: One day of training for teachers and mentors is available from Reading Is Fundamental.

GE volunteers: The *Mentor's Guide* helps volunteers maximize their contributions. One month before each class, the volunteers meet with the teachers to look over the modules, plan the experiments, and discuss what is involved and how it will be presented. Prior to the class, the volunteers look over the materials, the experiments, and their notes for what they will do. Then, once each week for an hour, volunteers work with the teachers to conduct the Lab experiments. Two volunteers can work as a team covering the class schedule and discussing the experiments they will conduct. The volunteers meet with each other to discuss their experiments and notes and to share what worked and what didn't.

Grant uses: Money is used to purchase the kits and replacement items as well as related books.

Sites and Contact

Fort Edward Elementary School
220 Broadway
Fort Edward, NY 12828

K.R. Smith Elementary School
2025 Clarice Drive
San Jose, CA 95122

Lubeck Elementary School
Rural Route #3
Box 177
Parkersburg, WV 26101

STAR — Science Technology
And Reading
Reading Is Fundamental, Inc.
600 Maryland Avenue, SW, Suite 600
Smithsonian Institution
Washington, DC 20024

Super Lit Quiz Bowl

A contest to challenge students' knowledge of literature

Grades: 3–5

Site
Wrightsboro Elementary School
2716 Castle Hayne Road
Wilmington, NC 28401

How it works: Students read books in the Accelerated Reader Program that have been identified as Super Lit books. They read the books either in class or outside the class. Then students in each class compete for team selection by taking a written test of 30 questions from the Accelerated Reader program. Four students from each class are selected for the four teams. In the Super Lit Quiz Bowl contest, teams are asked questions that are different from those used in the selection process. These multiple-choice, quick-response questions are created by the language arts coordinator. Team members must consult with each other to answer the questions. The audience is the student body, parents, volunteers, and teachers.

Why it is successful: In addition to improving their literacy levels, students are learning the skills of teamwork and cooperation, and this builds their self-esteem. Winning for the team brings other rewards such as ribbons and other extrinsic recognition.

Teacher training: No training is needed.

GE volunteers: In addition to reading to students on a regular basis, the volunteers participate in coaching and supporting students for the Super Lit Quiz Bowl.

Grant uses: Grants are used to purchase the books and the software for the Accelerated Reader Program as well as to replace books.

45

Tae Kwon Do

Learning self-awareness and self-discipline through martial arts

Grades: 3–6

How it works: Students work with the Tae Kwon Do expert twice each week. Teachers refer the students to this class so they can learn more about themselves and about their own capabilities. Students also learn self-discipline through the practice of this martial art.

Why it is successful: Students who would not otherwise be exposed to the rigors of training in a sport are taught valuable lessons and given individual attention. They also learn that they can succeed with concentration and practice, and that self-discipline is essential for any learning.

Teacher training: None is required.

GE volunteers: The volunteer in this program is an expert in this martial art and works with students on his own time. He is giving students an opportunity to grow in a special and important way.

Grant uses: Some funds are used to help purchase uniforms and enter competitions. The students themselves raise additional funds for this purpose.

Site
Chase Elementary School
4151 Turrill Street
Cincinnati, OH 45223

H6

Troll Multicultural Program

Enjoying literature in a summer program

Grades: K–6

How it works: This summer program is held for two hours on Saturday morning for 12 weeks at the local Boys and Girls Club. Students in grades K–3 and 4–6 and GE volunteers read books together, in pairs and groups, and do the activities offered in the Troll Multicultural Program. The two-hour program begins with one hour of reading a book about one of the four cultures in the series. Multiple copies of the five titles for each culture allow students to read in groups. The second hour is spent enjoying an ethnic snack, followed by a guest speaker who talks about the culture the students read about that day. The books in the Troll Multicultural Program focus on Hispanic, Native American, African, and Asian cultures.

Why it is successful: Students and volunteers enjoy reading books featuring different cultures. Their reading is enhanced by guest speakers who share their knowledge about the cultures. Following this first year of the program, coordinators and teachers will focus on ways to increase student enrollment.

Teacher training: None is needed. Teachers select the students who will participate. The educational director of the Boys and Girls Club plans the activities using the Troll Program.

GE volunteers: Two-hour training includes guidelines on how to interact with children, how to build their self-esteem, and how to use the materials. Volunteers enjoy their weekly sessions.

Grant uses: The grant pays for the purchase of the Troll Multicultural Program.

Site and Contact
Boys and Girls Club
1302 Ashe Street
Hendersonville, NC 28739

Troll Multicultural Program
Troll Communications
100 Corporate Drive
Mahwah, NJ 07430

Recommended Contents: Early Years Initiative Application

Criteria

All projects must aim at improving students' reading. Proposals may target reading and math, reading and science, reading and social studies, etc., but the core issue must be reading. The strategy to improve reading may target students, teachers, and/or parents.

There must be a relationship between the corporate volunteer organization and the school or school system, whether or not it is formally designated an "adoption." There must be *significant* chapter involvement in the proposed project. However nonmembers are encouraged to volunteer.

Proposals must be for specific projects and not for normal operating expenses of a school, salaries, computers, or hardware.

Preference will be given to projects addressing poor and disadvantaged populations, but others may be considered. If a chapter is not located in or near an urban or poor school district, the Foundation will consider a project at a local public school.

Proposals should not be for a capital campaign or renovation work, unless there is a discrete piece that can be "owned" by the corporation.

Projects should have high community visibility.

Procedure

What to submit:

A brief description of the project submitted by the school or the school district.

A description of the corporate volunteer organization's relationship with the school and the organization's involvement in the proposed project.

The number of volunteers recruited or anticipated.

An endorsement by the chapter chair.

A plan for evaluating the project.

Grants are usually payable to a school district or government agency. If paid to a third party, include the name of the nonprofit organization to receive the funding, and a copy of that organization's IRS letter certifying 501 (c) (3) status.

GE Fund

Elfun

A Volunteer Organization
of GE Leaders

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